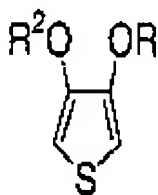


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1.(original) A process for preparing 3,4-dialkoxythiophene of the following chemical formula [1] or 3,4-alkylenedioxythiophene of the following chemical formula [2],

Chemical Formula [1]

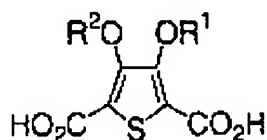


Chemical Formula [2]



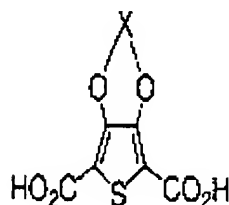
which consists of decarboxylating, respectively, a parent 3,4-dialkoxy-2,5-thiophenedicarboxylic acid of the following chemical formula [3],

Chemical Formula [3]



wherein R^1 and R^2 are each a straight-chain or branched alkyl with 1 to 9 carbon atoms, or a parent 3,4-alkylenedioxy-2,5-thiophenedicarboxylic acid of the following chemical formula [4],

Chemical Formula [4]



wherein X represents an optionally substituted $-(CH_2)_n-$, where n is an integer from 1 to 9, in a water-miscible polar solvent that has a boiling point lower than 225°C under an oxygen atmosphere by removing solvent by washing with water and isolation of the product by simple vacuum distillation.

2.(original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the oxygen atmosphere is either air or pure oxygen gas.

3.(original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the water-miscible polar solvent is a solvent or solvent mixture of two or more solvents selected from a group consisting of sulfoxides, alcohols and amides.

4.(currently amended) A process according to ~~claims 1 to 3~~claim 1, wherein the solvent is a solvent or solvent mixture of two or more solvents selected from a group consisting of dimethylsulfoxide, N,N-dimethylformamide and ethylene glycol.

5.(original) A process according to claim 4, wherein the copper catalyst is a catalyst selected from a group consisting of copper powder and copper salts, or a mixture of copper powder and copper salt.

6.(original) A process according to claim 5, wherein the copper salt is selected from a group consisting of basic cuprous (cupric) carbonate, cuprous (cupric) sulfate, cuprous (cupric) oxide and cuprous (cupric) hydroxide.

7.(currently amended) A process according to ~~claims 1 to 6~~claim 1, wherein the decarboxylation is performed at a temperature from 100 to 170°C.

8.(original) A process according to claim 7, wherein the decarboxylation is performed at a temperature from 120 to 140°C.

9.(currently amended) A process as in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~claim
1, the 3,4-dialkoxythiophene and 3,4-alkylenedioxythiophene are 3,4-
dimethoxythiophene and 3,4-ethylenedioxythiophene respectively.